

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 /081 W

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R 102236Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8861

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 02096

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR' ET

SUBJECT: GENERAL NEGA TEGEGN IN LONDON

SUMMARY: THE ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION SUFFERS FROM FEW SUPPLIES, POOR CREDIBILITY, AND TACTICAL INDECISION, ACCORDING TO ITS MILITARY LEADER GENERAL NEGA TEGEGN. BUT IF THE EDU IS IN BAD SHAPE, THE DIRG IS IN WORSE CONDITION: DISORGANIZED, UNPOPULAR, INEPT. NEGA CLAIMS ETHIOPIA IS CAREENING TOWARDS ANARCHY AND CIVIL WAR. AS HIS MOVEMENT CONTINUES THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ADDIS GOVERNMENT, HE ASKS FOR AMERICAN NEUTRALITY. END SUMMARY.

1. ON FEBRUARY 9 EMBASSY OFFICER MET BRIEFLY WITH GENERAL NEGA TEGEGN, MILITARY COMMANDER OF THE DISSIDENT ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (EDU). NEGA, WHO SAYS HE HAS SPENT MUCH OF THE LAST FEW MONTHS INSIDE ETHIOPIA, EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD COME TO LONDON TO ATTEND A MAJOR MEETING OF HIS ORGANIZATION. IN CONVERSATION, GENERAL

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NEGA STRESSED THAT ETHIOPIA IS NOW PRECARIOUSLY BALANCED

BETWEEN SOME FORM OF ALTERNATIVE GOVERNMENT ON ONE SIDE AND UTTER CHAOS ON THE OTHER. THE DIRG HAS VIRTUALLY LOST CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY, HE CLAIMED, AND ITS CONTINUED EXISTENCE ONLY ENHANCES THE LIKELIHOOD THAT A DISASTROUS ANARCHY LIES SOMEWHERE IN ETHIOPIA'S FUTURE. THE NORTHERN PROVINCES ARE THOROUGHLY OPPOSED TO THE DIRG; ERITREA CONTINUES TO PIN DOWN FIFTY PERCENT OF ETHIOPIA'S ARMY; THE OGADEN, STIMULATED BY SOMALI INFILTRATION, IS AGAIN RESTIVE. ADDIS ABABA, NEGA SAID, IS INCREASINGLY AN ISLAND IN AN OCEAN OF DISSIDENCE.

2. THE EDU, NEGA ASSERTED, FACES THREE PROBLEMS. FIRST, MODERN MILITARY SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE TO EDU ADHERENTS IN ANY SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES. THERE IS A WIDE VARIETY OF WEAPONS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCES BUT THEIR DIVERSITY AND AGE MAKE AMMUNITION DIFFICULT TO COME BY. STILL, THE GENERAL SAID, THERE IS A TRICKLE OF SUPPLIES COMING INTO ETHIOPIA FROM SUDAN AND LIMITED GUERRILLA ACTIVITY AGAINST POLICE POSTS AND MILITARY DETACHMENTS HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL. SECOND, EDU HAS NOT COMPLETELY ESTABLISHED ITS NATIONALIST CREDENTIALS AMONG ETHIOPIANS BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY. UNDERSTANDABLY, NEGA SAID, THERE IS A SUSPICION THAT EDU IS MONARCHIST AND REACTIONARY. THE ORGANIZATION IS GRADUALLY DISSIPATING THESE DOUBTS, HE SAID, AND MORE EFFECTIVELY DESCRIBING ITS PROGRAM OF REPUBLICAN, MODERATE, AND NON-ALIGNED GOVERNMENT, LAND REFORM, AND A FEDERAL SYSTEM OF STATES (WITH VIRTUAL AUTONOMY FOR ERITREA). THIRD, EDU HAS NOT YET DEVELOPED A POLITICAL/MILITARY STRATEGY THAT WILL SET THE BEST CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THE DIRG'S COLLAPSE. EDU LEADERSHIP FEARS THAT WIDESPREAD MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WILL ONLY INCREASE THE CHANCES OF ANARCHY IN THE COUNTRY. THE MOVEMENT, THE GENERAL CLAIMED, COULD EASILY DISRUPT

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 02096

THE MAJOR ROUTES IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCES, BUT AN ISOLATED AND BELEAGUERED CENTRAL GOVERNMENT COULD NOT CONTROL THE NATURAL CENTRIFUGAL SWIRL OF ETHIOPIA, AND ANY SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE UNABLE TO REASSERT CENTRAL AUTHORITY.

3. NEGA SAID THE EDU DOES NOT SEEK HELP FOR ITS MOVEMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES. HE EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING FOR AMERICAN POLICY AND EVEN ENCOURAGED THE CONTINUATION OF US MILITARY AID TO THE EMPG. THE EDU RECOGNIZES, HE SAID, THAT AMERICAN POLICY MUST SUPPORT WHATEVER GOVERNMENT SHOWS A CHANCE OF HOLDING ETHIOPIA TOGETHER, AND SOMALI ADVENTURISM MAKES A STRONG MILITARY ESSENTIAL. WHAT THE EDU WANTS FROM THE UNITED STATES, NEGA SAID, IS NEUTRALITY. THE DIRG IS SO DISORGANIZED, SO INEXPERIENCED, AND SO UNPOPULAR THAT IT IS BOUND TO FALL; THE EDU IS THE BEST, LOGICAL ALTERNATIVE. AS ETHIOPIANS ATTEMPT TO

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SORT OUT THEIR INTERNAL POLITICS, NEGA ASKED ONLY THAT AMERICA TAKE NO SIDE.

4. COMMENT: DURING THE CONVERSATION, NEGA REPEATED MANY OF THE SAME POINTS HE HAD MADE IN A DISCUSSION WITH THE EMBASSY OFFICER LAST AUGUST (LONDON 12331 (NOTAL) AND DID NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE EDU HAD PICKED UP MUCH STEAM IN THE INTERVENING MONTHS. A FOREIGN OFFICE OFFICIAL REMARKED RECENTLY THAT THE EDU SEEMS TO BE SPUTTERING, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT, AND THAT HE BELIEVED THE PURPOSE OF THE LONDON EDU MEETING WAS TO DECIDE HOW BEST OR EVEN WHETHER TO PROCEED.

5. NEGA'S LAMENT THAT EDU HAS ONLY WON SPOTTY SUCCESS IN ITS EFFORT TO ESTABLISH REPUBLICAN CREDENTIALS IS NOT SURPRISING. NEGA IS MARRIED TO PRINCESS RUTH DESTA, A GRANDDAUGHTER OF THE LATE EMPEROR; RAS MENGESHA, WHO IS NEGA'S ASSOCIATE IN THE EDU, IS MARRIED TO PRINCESS AIDA DESTA, ANOTHER IMPERIAL GRANDDAUGHTER. BOTH PRINCESSES ARE AMONG THOSE ROYAL FAMILY MEMBERS NOW HELD IN AN ADDIS PRISON.

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